

King County Benchmarks

2004

Land Use

Highlights

King County's Key Land Use Policies are Working

"The land use pattern for King County shall protect the natural environment by reducing the consumption of land and concentrating development..." (Countywide Planning Policy, FW 6)

By the end of this year King County will have completed the first ten years of its comprehensive planning under the Washington State Growth Management Act (GMA). Although jurisdiction-level data collection on development did not begin until 1996, we now have at least eight years of data about land use change since the implementation of the GMA. In many cases, census data and other sources can help us compare progress during the growth management period to earlier trends.

The findings for these first ten years are very encouraging. Particularly in the area of land use policy, the County is clearly moving in the direction of the goals articulated in the Countywide Planning Policies. While not every trend is positive, there is clear evidence that we are doing many things right.

Preserving the Rural Area:

- Currently 96% of all residential growth is occurring within the urban growth area, compared to 92% in 1996.
- Between 1996 and 2002, the percent of residential growth in the County that was located in the rural areas was cut in half, from 8% to just 4%. During 2003 that lower rate of rural development has held steady.
- Employment in the rural area is about 1.6% of the County employment, slightly higher than in 1995, but still in keeping with the rural character.



Building these five townhomes on a redeveloped single-family home site makes efficient use of land, increases the urban housing supply, and helps preserve rural land from development.

- Total available farmland in the County is nearly 67,000 acres. Of that, the total acreage currently being farmed is 42,000 acres - about 3% of County land area. This amount has changed very little since 1992.
- Forest land is also being conserved. There has been no net loss of forest land since 1996. The trend toward dramatic loss of forest cover that occurred between 1972 and 1996 has been reversed, and the quality of forest land is being protected.

Developing the Urban Centers

- King County's urban centers have attracted 21% of all housing units built over the last nine years - close to the target of 25%.
- However, in 2003, only about 10% of units permitted were in the urban centers, and they were all in Seattle, Bellevue, or Redmond.
- The urban centers in some of the suburban cities are small. They have struggled to attract development during a period of weak economic growth.

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Indicator Flags



There has been a long-term trend in a positive direction, or most recent data shows a market improvement



There has been little significant movement in this Indicator, or the trend has been mixed



There has been a long-term negative trend, or the most recent data shows a significant downturn



There is insufficient reliable data for this Indicator

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Highlights (continued from page one)

- The urban centers and the manufacturing centers taken together have accommodated about 41% of all new jobs generated between 1995 and 2002. This is approaching the Countywide Planning goal that 50% of all new jobs will be in the centers.
- Several of the centers do not yet have enough job and resident density to support high levels of transit service. Good transit planning for these areas may help stimulate economic and residential growth.

Providing for Growth in the Cities

- Housing unit growth in the County's urban area is proceeding at a rate above what is needed to house the population growth expected by 2022.
- While there is wide variation among individual cities in attracting new housing development, all four of the County's sub-regions are ahead of schedule in permitting new units.
- 98.4% of employment is located in the urban area.

Using Urban Land with Greater Efficiency.

- Over 43% of all new residential units are being built on land that had a pre-existing use.
- Average densities in single family zones throughout the urban area have increased from 3.8 dwelling units (DUs) per acre in the 1996 - 2000 period to 5.6 DUs per acre in 2003, creating more concentrated development in the urban area, and reducing the need to develop new land.

- As a result of these efficiencies, only about 4% of urban King County was newly developed from 1996 - 2003, while the population grew by 8.9%.
- There is still nearly twice as much residential land capacity in the urban area as will be needed to meet the 2022 housing target.

Bringing Jobs and Housing Together

- With about 1.4 jobs per household, King County remains the job center for the four-county region.
- However, the 2001 - 2003 slowdown in job growth has not slowed residential growth. This means a more adequate supply of housing for the current demand.
- There are now more jobs per housing unit in the Eastside than in Seattle. It is likely that more Eastsiders than in the past, work on the same side of the lake as they live.

Ensuring Adequate Parks and Open Space

- The acres of urban parks and open space per thousand residents has continued to climb, reaching 15.0 in 2003. This is the highest it has been during the GMA period. The total acreage in parks has grown by 11% in 8 years.

Outcome: Encourage Livable, Diverse Communities**Indicator 37: Acres of Urban Parks and Open Space****Countywide Planning Policy Rationale**

"All jurisdictions shall work cooperatively to ensure parks and open spaces are provided as development and redevelopment occur." (CPP, CC-11)

The parks and open space indicator measures the change in parks acreage over time. It also measures whether we are increasing our parks and open space in proportion to the growth in our population. The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) recommends a ratio of 6 - 10 acres per thousand residents for "close to home" park space, and a ratio of 15.2 acres per thousand for "regional space".

Key Trends

- King County has over 24,500 acres of urban parks and open space, compared to 22,000 in 1996. This is an increase of about 11% in eight years.
- During this same period, the urban population has grown by just 7.3%, resulting in a net gain of park space per resident.

Fig. 37.1 **Total Acres of Urban Parks and Open Space**

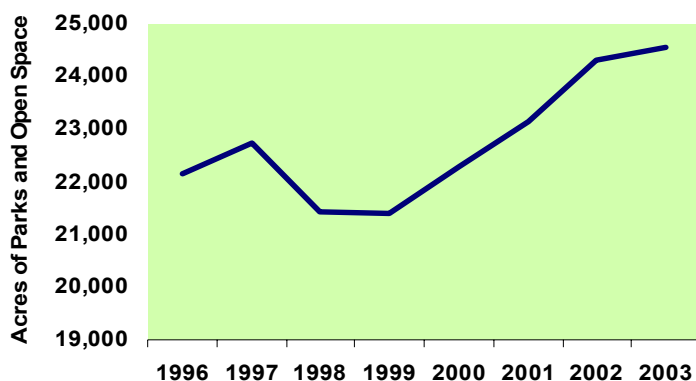
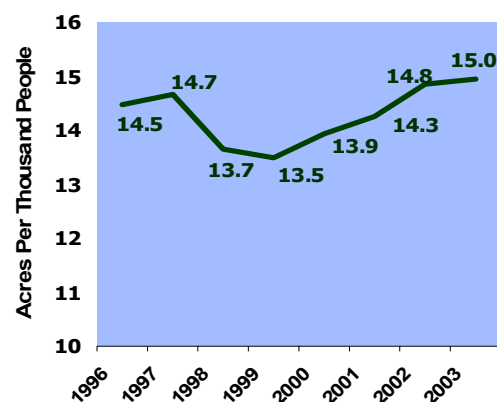


Fig. 37.2

Acres of Urban Park and Open Space Per Thousand Residents

- There are now about 15.0 acres of parks and open space per one thousand urban residents.
- The rapid increase in population during the late 1990s caused a temporary decline in the number of acres per thousand residents, but as population growth has leveled off, the urban region has regained a healthy ratio of parks to residents.
- King County transferred ownership of nearly 400 acres of parks and pool sites to cities and other agencies in 2003. Parks have remained open and available to residents despite the change in ownership and management.

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